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ABSTRACT

This document contains a research report and a teacher's guide about the importance of questioning in children's education. The research was based on the belief that effective information processing begins with the learner's desire to ask questions. The report identifies four basic types of questions: (1) evaluative, which involves making judgments, (2) divergent, which involves prediction or hypothesis, (3) convergent, which involves explanation or comparison, and (4) cognitive-memory, which involves recall. Interviews with students in grades five through 12 revealed that students want to ask higher-level questions, but they don't. This is partly due to inhibition and inability to verbalize the questions. Part two of this document, the teacher's guide, suggests techniques to help teachers frame instruction to encourage students' higher-level questions in divergent and evaluative modes of thought. Beginning with the establishment of a confidential classroom atmosphere, three general types of activities are identified. The activities emphasize student awareness, instructional level, and skill practice. The bulk of the guide contains samples of teachers' directions and student materials which promote higher-level questioning within all three types of activity. Grade levels are five, eight, and 11. (MR)

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QUESTIONS SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS ASK

ESEA Title IV-C
Research Project
of

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NORTH MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION
105 North Main Street
Linden, IN 47955

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Director

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The work reported herein was performed pursuant to a grant from the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Indiana Department of Public Instruction. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education or the Indiana Department of Public Instruction and no official endorsement by either should be inferred.

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- Preface -

Human beings by their very nature are inquirers. An inquirer is one who asks questions at all levels. Students, being human, come to school anticipating the use of their total faculties, but soon learn that their expectations are different from those of the school. Asked only to use lower levels of questioning, students soon develop a split personality, operating at one level in school and both levels in the real world.

The research completed by the project staff this year dramatically supports the above statement and we will allow the data to speak for itself.

It is important for the reader to understand what we are saying about the student in order to see that we are not proposing to present any new ideas to students but simply to allow them to utilize what they already have, that is a preference for questions at all four levels, in social studies classes. Should we be successful at that, the change in students will be inevitable.

. . .

The innovative part of our project, if there was any, was not in finding another dragon to fight in the plethora of educational monsters, but rather was an attempt to find a new direction to come against the same old foe.

Social studies, and indeed, all disciplines of education have been bombarded in the last twenty years with one panacea after another. We have observed and remember fondly the phenomenon of the 60's known as "Inquiry" (author's emphasis). In a lot of ways, those folks were closer to the answer than they, or we, realized. However, in the rush to participate, many of us memorized the jargon and plunged in thinking that now we had the ultimate method of teaching. Students were generally underwhelmed by the whole thing and many of us, not willing to admit that we couldn't make it work, jumped ship, preferring to bob about in the waves of confusion until the next ship of the "New Social Studies" (author's emphasis) came along.

And come along, she did, fueled by great quantities of federal monies and a newly discovered private market, a number of people launched projects to write the "ultimate" social studies material. we tried program after program, many of which were excellent, but still received the same dull 'thud' of student reaction.

Being a slow learner, it took about fifteen years of this sojourning before I finally realized that it was neither method nor material that would remove Excaliber from the stone. The enabling force necessary to initiate classroom activity seemed, as it probably always has, to lie in the grasp of the student.

At this point entered James L. Barth of Purdue University's Social Studied Education Department. Dr. Barth surmized that students wanted to ask questions, and wanted to ask them at different levels but "schools" tended to discourage that for a number of reasons.[1] He shared with Dr. Francis P. Hunkins of the University of Washington, a strong commitment to the notion that no information is processed without a question first being generated by the learner. Furthermore, both the good Doctors seemed to agree that to be a complete inquirer, a student must operate at both lower and higher levels of questioning.

The research phase of our Title IV-C project, "Questions Social Studies Students Ask", was designed to demonstrate statistically that all of this was indeed the case. The data was overwhelmingly convincing that both Dr. Hunkins and Dr. Barth had read the same book. Kids did choose to operate at all four levels,[2] they did show a slight preference for higher level questions, and they saw no connection between questioning and "schooling".[3]

Phase two of the project begins with the hypothesis that of all those things affecting the questions stduents ask, the one we might be able to deal with most effectively is their questioning skill. We hold that the ability to question at all four levels is a skill and as such can be learned!

Our proposal is to produce materials for students which will cause them to ask questions at all four levels. Our intentions are to produce model (or demonstration) packets using American History content for grades five, eight and eleven. It is hoped that these packets will serve as models enabling teachers to produce their own using whatever content or even subject area they are involved in.

[1]see figure one
[2]see figure two
[3]see research summary

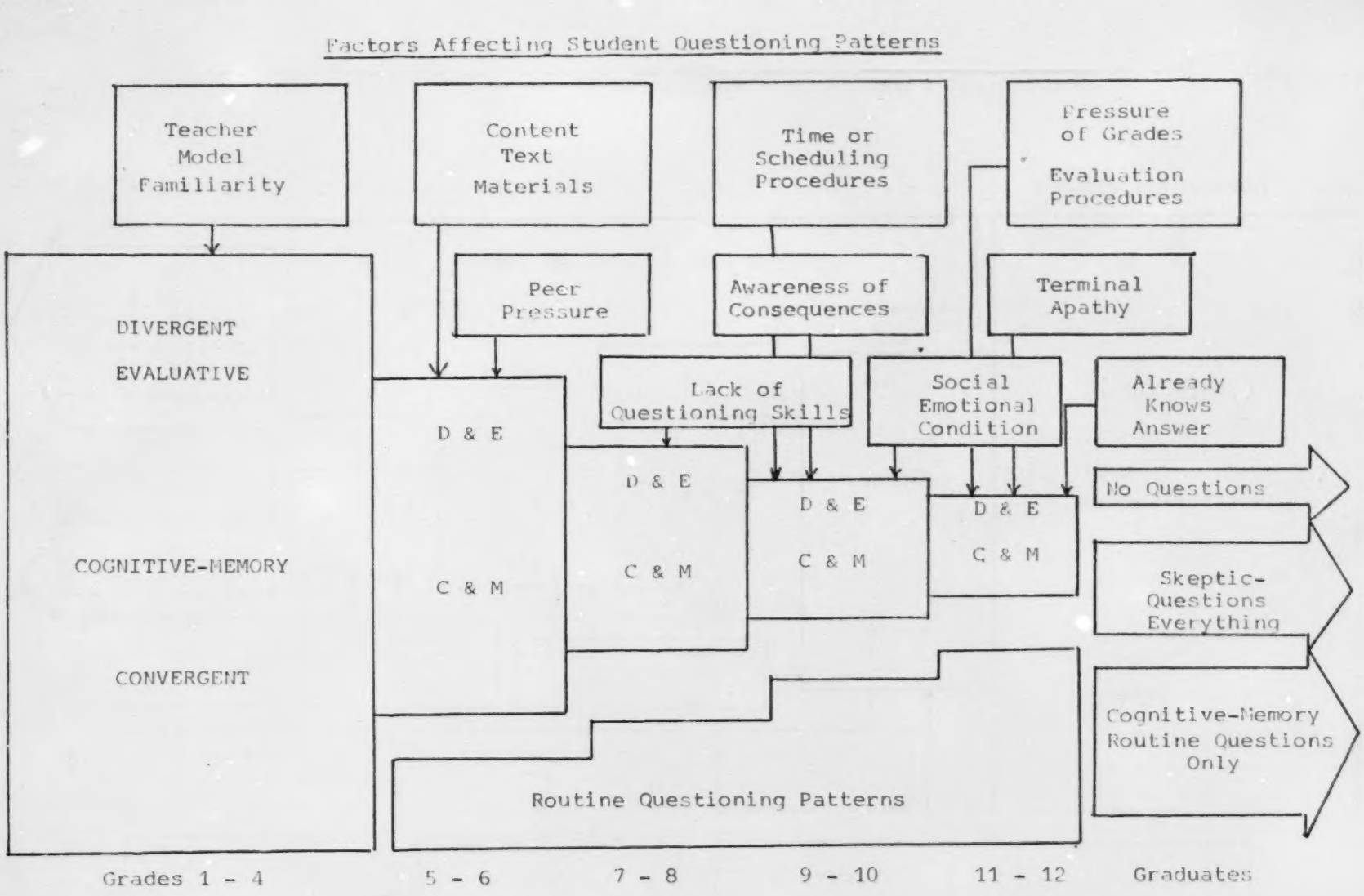
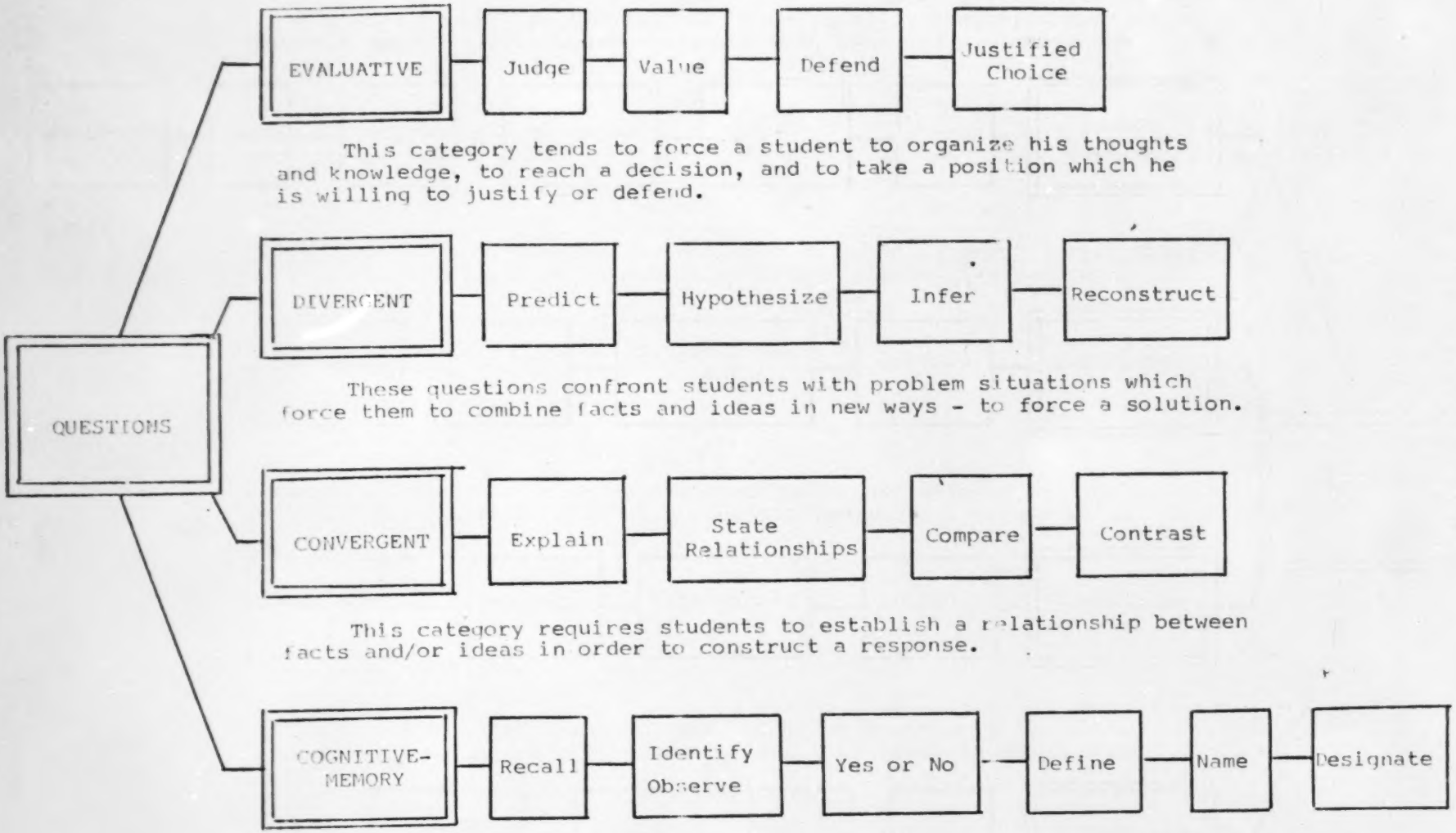


FIGURE 1 - QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF QUESTIONS ASKED BY SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS.

We have a feeling that this is not just a "social studies" project but one which might have implications for anyone put in the position of teaching a roomful of students. But that's for you to decide.

Once we have material developed (January 1979) we will be happy to share it with any of you. Please feel free to ask any questions you might have (at any level) at any time.

FIGURE 2 - TAXONOMY


QUESTIONS
EVALUATIVE
Judge
Value
Defend
Justified Choice
This category tends to force a student to organize his thoughts and knowledge, to reach a decision, and to take a position which he is willing to justify or defend.
DIVERGENT
Predict
Hypothesize
Infer
Reconstruct
These questions confront students with problem situations which force them to combine facts and ideas in new ways - to force a solution.
CONVERGENT
Explain
State Relationships
Compare
Contrast
This category requires students to establish a relationship between facts and/or ideas in order to construct a response.
COGNITIVE-MEMORY
Recall
Identify
Observe
Yes or No
Define
Name
Designate
Questions of this type seek answers which usually require student to reproduce factual information or definitions relying on recall or recognition skills only.

In an attempt to demonstrate the impact of the data collected and yet spare the reader from searching thru pages of computer printouts, only the summary report of the pre- and post-tests has been included.

Page 7 shows the students' preference, by grade level, for higher level (combined divergent and evaluative) questions. There is dramatic evidence that students are interested in both levels with a slight preference for higher level questions at each grade level. We were also interested to learn that preference was not a function of grade level as their choices were basically the same in fifth grade as twelfth grade.

The difference was in their performance. The most significant thing learned in the in-depth interviews was that the kind of questions students want to ask and the kind they do ask are two different things.

Refering back to figure 1, we have tried to offer a number of possible reasons for this phenomenon occuring as it does. Perhaps it would suffice to say that all of these factors come into play at one point or another during the K - 12 experience of most students. It is our hope that by dealing successfully with one of those (lack of questioning skills) we will be able to significantly reduce the impact of the others.

QUESTION COMBINATION DATA BY GRADES and SUMMARY

....

		Pre-test	Post-test
RANKS			
Grade 5	Combined Cognitive-Memory and Convergent	46.93%	48.59 (+1.66)
	Combined Divergent and Evaluative	53.07%	51.41 (-1.66)
RANKS			
Grade 6	Combined Cognitive-Memory and Convergent	47.26%	45.12 (-2.14)
	Combined Divergent and Evaluative	52.74%	54.88 (+2.14)
RANKS			
Grade 7	Combined Cognitive-Memory and Convergent	45.77%	44.61 (-1.16)
	Combined Divergent and Evaluative	54.23%	55.39 (+1.16)
RANKS			
Grade 8	Combined Cognitive-Memory and Convergent	46.23%	45.03 (-1.2)
	Combined Divergent and Evaluative	53.77%	54.98 (+1.2)
RANKS			
Grade 11	Combined Cognitive-Memory and Convergent	45.59%	44.58 (-1.01)
	Combined Divergent and Evaluative	54.41%	55.42 (+1.01)
RANKS			
Grade 12	Combined Cognitive-Memory and Convergent	45.00%	44.96 (-.04)
	Combined Divergent and Evaluative	55.00%	55.02 (+.04)

SUMMARYFor RANKS with Grouping

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

For Combined Cognitive-Memory and Convergent		46.12%	45.56 (-.56)
For Combined Divergent and Evaluative		53.88%	54.44 (+.56)

QUESTION COMBINATION DATA BY GRADES and SUMMARY

••••••

An interesting spin-off of our research was that during our in-depth interviews with students, students kept coming up with reasons why they did or didn't ask more questions in class. We put these all together and asked three hundred students to check those items that seemed most valid to them.

The three most marked responses were:

1. (19%) "What we're studying doesn't interest me."
2. (14%) "Other kids will laugh at me or think I'm trying to be a 'brain'."
3. (14%) "I don't know how to ask questions very well."

The first two were not surprises as we are all aware that motivation and peer pressure have a lot to do with students' classroom attitudes. We did find the third item of significance as we hope the material that we are going to produce will give very practical instructions on teaching the skills of questioning.

On the positive side, the students also demonstrated that questioning had a considerable impact on the classroom with these two responses:

1. (16%) "It's important for me to ask questions to learn."
2. (16%) "I feel students asking questions makes class more interesting."

It seems clear to us that student questioning plays a vital role in determining what happens in the classroom and we are looking forward to utilizing this new found information in our classrooms next year.

Questions Social Studies Students Ask

ESEA Title IV-C

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Eual S. McCauley, Superintendent

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QUESTION: "Who is the most important person in your classroom?"

ANSWER: "You are!"

That's right, <u>you</u> are.

Don't apologize for that, just accept it.

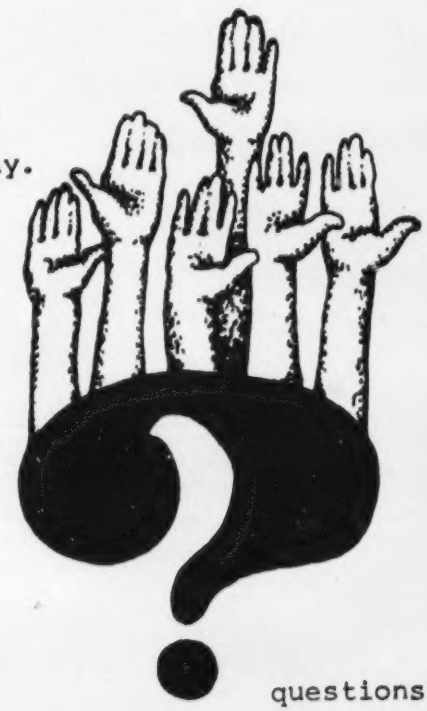
We are convinced that the TEACHER is the single most important factor in determining what happens in the classroom--no exceptions!

QUESTION: "Would your job be easier if your students would ask more questions?"

ANSWER: #1. "Yes!" Read on.

#2. "No." Stop reading.

Return material to sender. Thanks anyway.



NOW, if you are still with us, we are going to guess that you have a question, and that is,

"O.K., so how do I get kids to ask more questions?"

We are glad you asked that.....turn the page.....

.....As briefly as we can state it, we have put together some activities which COMBINED WITH your interest and direction WILL cause YOUR STUDENTS to ask MORE questions.

.....there are four pieces to the puzzle.....

the TEACHER

- who serves as a model of the good questioner.

Don't panic!

You are going to learn a lot with the kids as you do this.

- there is a certain kind of classroom

the feeling

atmosphere necessary for students to be active questioners. This is about one-half your job and one-half the students'. We give you some suggestions on the next page as to the ingredients of a good questioning atmosphere. Study them and see how they fit.

- in the final analysis, students will only question you as you question them so we are going to work together on the kinds of evaluation that you do. Maybe we can help you to write questions at different levels on your tests.

the TEST

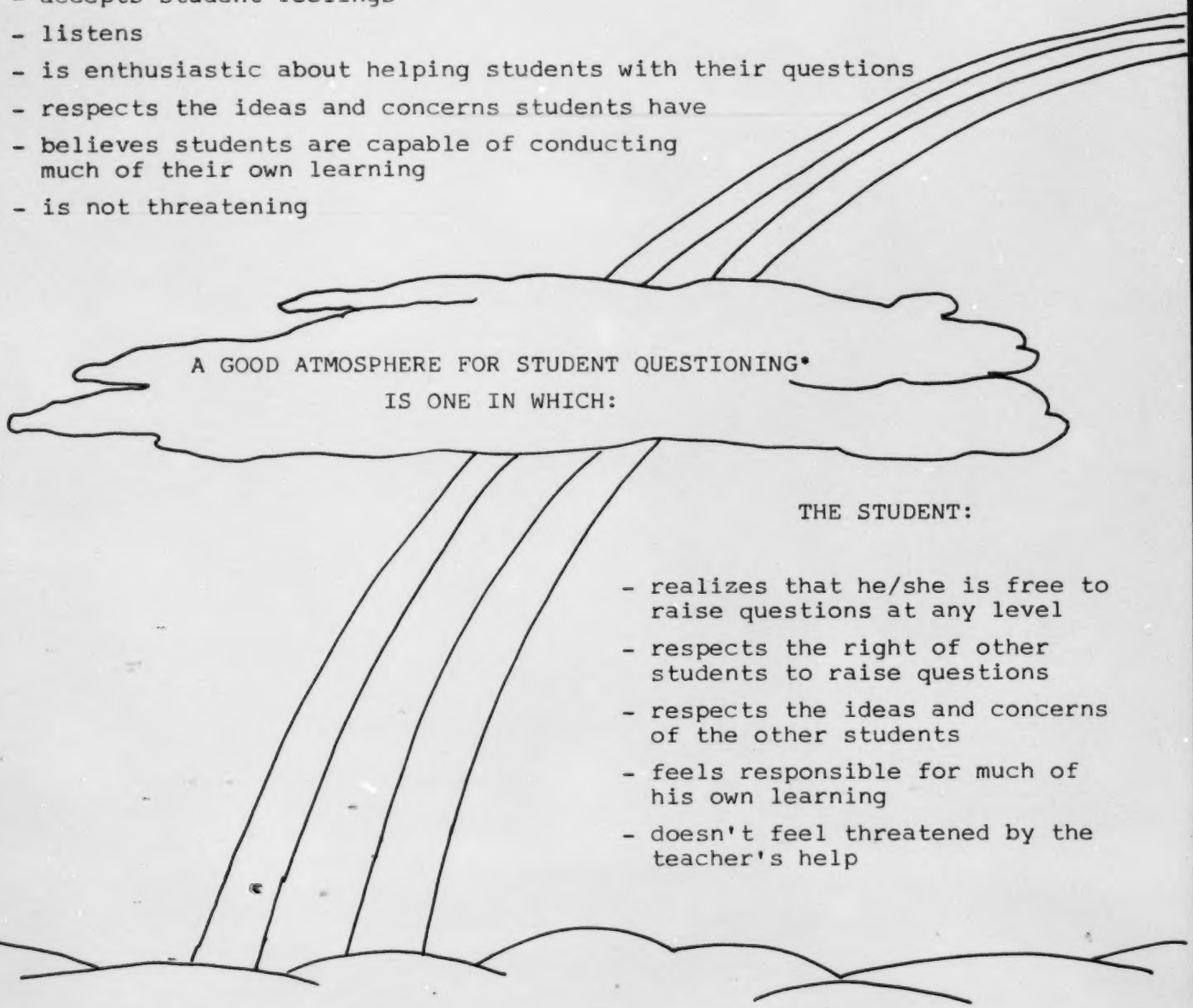
- the materials for students that we have prepared for you to use in teaching them basic questioning skills. The student materials are divided into three phases:

1) The Awareness Level,
2) The Instructional Level, and
3) The Skill Development Level.

the STUFF

THE TEACHER:

- accepts student feelings
- listens
- is enthusiastic about helping students with their questions
- respects the ideas and concerns students have
- believes students are capable of conducting much of their own learning
- is not threatening



THE STUDENT:

- realizes that he/she is free to raise questions at any level
- respects the right of other students to raise questions
- respects the ideas and concerns of the other students
- feels responsible for much of his own learning
- doesn't feel threatened by the teacher's help

It is also very important that the teacher and students have confidence in ONE ANOTHER.

*adapted from, Involving Students in Questioning, Hunkins.

THIS IS WHAT'S COMING AT YOU

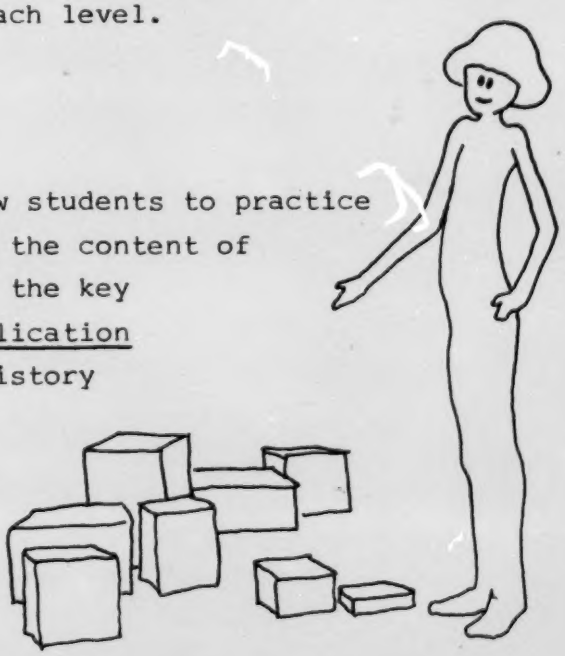
PHASE I: STUDENT AWARENESS

These are activities that will cause students to have an awareness that there are different kinds of questions and stimulate their curiosity to want to learn more about the process of question-asking.

PHASE II: INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL

These are activities designed to cause students to ask and utilize questions at each level. We are primarily interested in their discerning between those types of questions we will call "open" (divergent and evaluative) and those we will call "closed" (cognitive-memory and convergent). They should then develop the necessary skills to identify the categories and be able to ask questions at each level.

PHASE III: SKILL PRACTICE



These are activities which should allow students to practice those skills learned in Phase II using the content of the course they are studying. This is the key phase of the material as it is the application of these skills to the study of U.S. History by both the teachers and students that will make it all happen.

Now that you have had a chance to read some of the introductory materials, we hope that you can begin to sense that we are not talking about "another way" to teach social studies. We simply hold that the relationship each of us has with the world and the world with us, depends upon the kinds of questions we ask of each other.

If that is a legitimate premise then it just makes sense that the more capable we are of asking and analyzing questions, the better our lives will be.

We are not interested in settling the argument about which kinds of questions are most significant or most helpful for we have found that the exclusive use of <u>either</u> open or closed questions is extremely frustrating to both teacher and student. It is the successful application and integration of <u>both levels</u> of questions that brings about real learning experience.

On the following pages we have included samples of both teacher directions and student materials from all three levels of activities for each grade. This should give you a general idea of the kinds of materials and activities we have developed for teaching students to question.

SAMPLE MATERIALS

p. 7...Teacher directions for Awareness Activity #2, grade 5

p. 8...Student material for Awareness Activity #2, grade 5

p. 9...Teacher directions for Instructional Level

p. 10...Student material for Instructional Level, day 3, grade 11

p. 11...Teacher directions for Skill Development

p. 12...Teacher directions for Map Exercise, grade 8

p. 13...Map

p. 14...Student Material for Map Exercise, grade 8

p. 15...Summary

p. 16...Taxonomy

p. 17...Research Summary

p. 18...Quality and Quantity of Questions Asked By Social Studies Students

Awareness Activity #2
5th Grade
Teacher Directions
Time: 20-30 minutes

This activity is designed to cause students to think about the importance of questioning when faced with a new situation.

1. After making sure students understand the directions, allow them approximately ten (10) minutes to write their two questions.

2. Now have one student assume the role of of Chief Wel-Kum and allow each of the other students to read their question to him (as if they were Christopher Columbus).

3. Tell the students that you want them to choose the best question asked. Discuss the reasons for their choices by asking the following questions:

   "Which was the best question asked?"

   "Why did you like that one?"

   "Why are some questions better than others?"

   "What makes a good question?"

4. If time allows, you might want another student to assume the role of Christopher Columbus and have the other students read their Chief Wel-Kum questions. Again, provide time for the students to discuss what they think was the best question and why.

.....some questions are open.....some questions are closed.....some question

Imagine that you are Christopher Columbus and you have just landed in the New World (America).

As you are coming ashore, you see a tall Indian named Chief Wel-Kum step forward to greet you.

What would be the first <u>question</u> you would ask the Chief?

Think about that and then write your answer in the blank below.

If I were Christopher Columbus, I would ask the Chief, "_____

_____

_____"

Now, imagine that you are Chief Wel-Kum and you have watched this strange man come wading ashore from a giant ship. What would be the first question you would ask of Christopher Columbus?

If I were Chief Wel-Kum, I would ask Columbus,

_____

_____

_____"

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

When you meet someone for the first time, what kinds of questions do you ask them?

Teacher's Guide

LEVEL II

Here are four days of student activities which will help you teach your kids two things:

1) there are two kinds of questions (open/closed)
2) they will understand better and be more interested in learning as they begin to ask <u>both</u> levels of questions.

Lessons 1, 2, and 3 are self-programmed, take approximately 20 minutes, and should be completed on successive days. We suggest you do these before the students as their instructions call for them to ask for your help if they miss two or more of the identifications.

Lesson 4 is an activity which forms the basis for a group discussion. This will take approximately 40 minutes. We suggest the following procedure:

<u>LESSON FOUR</u>:

1. Hand out both sheets.
2. Have students complete first page.
3. When all are finished with page one, begin the discussion on page two. The following information will aid in your direction of the discussion.

    1) The purpose of closed questions is to center on the CORRECT answer. They ask a student to memorize and recite information.
    2) The purpose of open questions is to EXPAND the thought process to cause students to become involved in <u>creating</u> the answer by arranging material in new ways or interpreting information through their own value systems. There are many possible answers to an open question.
    3) The only "wrong" answer a student can give to an open question is one that has no base in the facts of the matter. Hence, solid answers to open questions are based on the information gained from their closed questioning and the two must go together to enable the student to be a successful problem solver.
    4) Either level of questioning when used exclusively will result in frustrating both the student and teacher.

    <u>Closed</u> questions alone lead to student frustration as strictly factual information is of little importance to their lives.

    <u>Open</u> questions alone lead to teacher frustration with "hot air" opinions that have no grounding in any factual understanding.

CLOSED QUESTIONS are ones that ask you to find the CORRECT answer. They ask you to memorize and recite information.

OPEN QUESTIONS ask you to become involved in creating the answer. You do this by arranging the material in new ways or interpreting information through your own value system. There are many possible answers to an open question.

The only "wrong" answer you can give to an open question is one that has no base in the facts of the matter. Hence, solid answers to open questions are based on the information you gained from closed questioning. The two go together in helping you operate more effectively in solving problems.

CLOSED:	RECALL:	identify	yes/no	define	
	EXPLAIN:	compare/contrast		clarify	
OPEN:	IMAGINE:	predict	reconstruct		conclude
	EVALUATE:	judge	choose		

DIRECTIONS: Put "O" or "C" to show whether the question is open or closed.

_____1. What was the Triangular Trade?

_____2. What do you think about the image of blacks in TV and movies?

_____3. Explain why the clause dealing with slavery was left out of the Declaration of Independence.

_____4. What role did Christianity play in slavery?

_____5. Why was music so important to the slaves?

_____6. What role did Frederick Douglass play in the anti-slavery movement?

_____7. Who was Crispus Attucks?

_____8. Do you think it was right or wrong for the slave owners to try to convert the blacks to Christianity?

_____9. Do you think most Americans are as sympathetic to the problems of black Americans as they are to the problems of the Indians?

_____10. Would our country be richer or poorer both materially and culturally if Africans had never been brought over?

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS: If you miss two or more questions, check with your teacher.

ANSWERS: 1.C, 2.O, 3.C, 4.C, 5.C, 6.C, 7.C, 8.O, 9.O, 10.O

Teacher's Guide

LEVEL III

This final series of activities includes the following:

1) exercises designed to encourage students to ask both open and closed questions.

2) exercises that cause students to apply questioning skills to materials commonly used in American History classes.

Using these exercises should demonstrate to both students and teachers the ways in which questioning skills enhance the use of content. Students who have these skills will be more in control of their own learning and teachers who successfully utilize this development will feel a lot better about what they do. Either way you win.

These exercises deal with different content areas and call for different types of student responses but as they all relate to American History they should appear to be a natural part of the course.

It is suggested that students do one skill exercise each week for five weeks. This should allow them to reinforce those skills learned in Level II.

We make no effort to hide the fact that the real success of this program doesn't lie in your use of this material, but in your using your own creativity and expertise to incorporate <u>both</u> <u>levels</u> of questioning in your own unique style of teaching.

Skill Development #1
5th Grade
Teacher Directions
Time: 20 minutes

This is an activity which will cause students to write closed questions about Montgomery County towns, highways and directions using the attached map and answers given.

PROCEDURE:

1) Hand out map of Montgomery County.

2) Distribute paper with the list of ten (10) answers.

   This will take some explanation as what you are asking the students to do is the reverse of the normal procedure.

3) Explain that you have given them a list of ten answers for which they are to write logical questions.

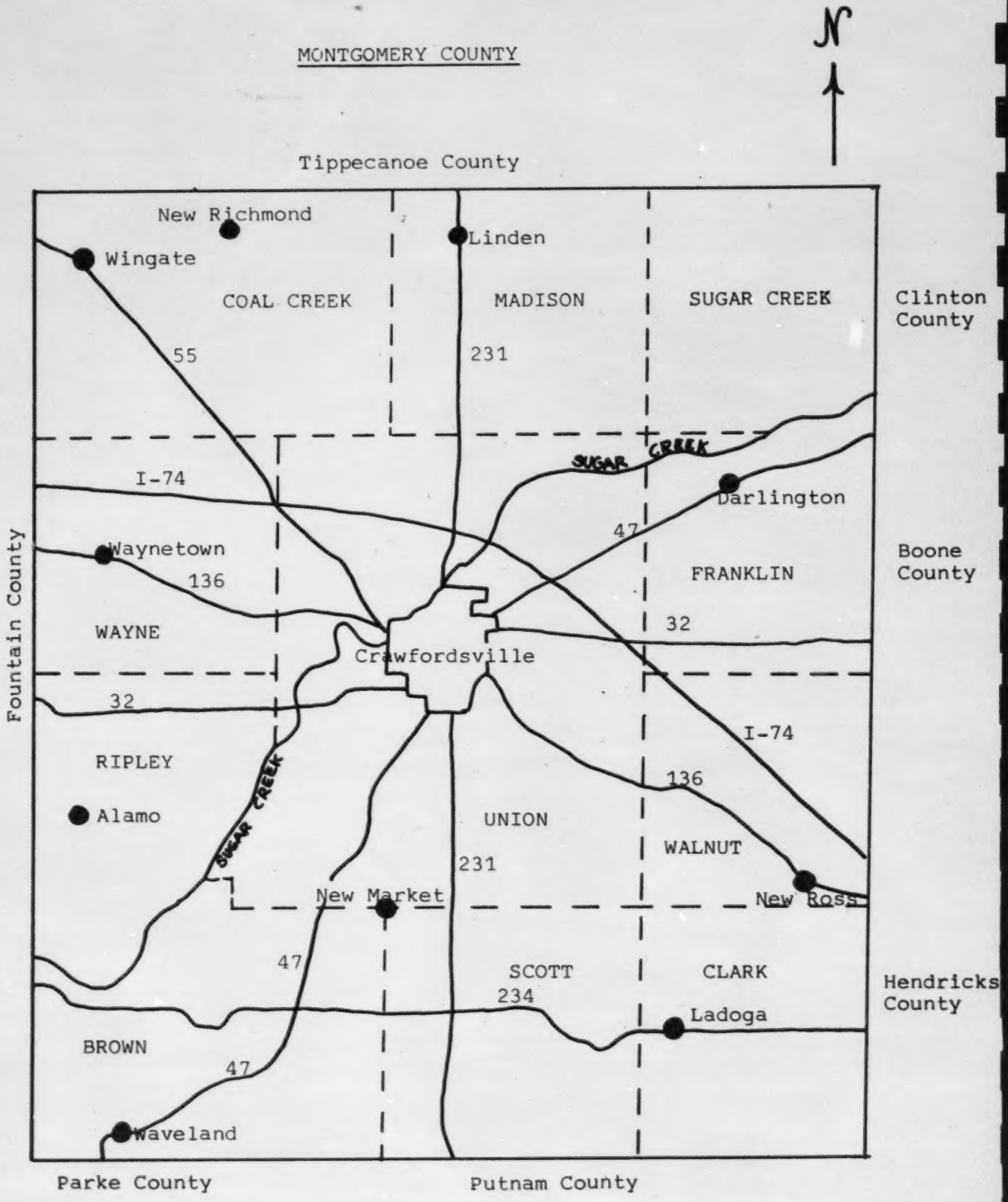
   Although there are several possible questions for each answer, there <u>are</u> "wrong" questions as they do not fit the answers.

   EXAMPLE:

   1. (47) *What highway passes through Wingate?*

4) When students finish writing their questions a brief discussion of their questions should reveal quickly whether or not they comprehended the answers as well as the level of map skills at which they are operating.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY



Below is a list of ten (10) answers. Your job is to write ten (10) questions that might fit the answers given.

Remember, the question must fit the answer, so look at the answers, study the map and write your questions.

EXAMPLE:

1. (West) What direction is Waynetown from Crawfordsville?

1. (47)_____

2. (231)_____

3. (Wingate)_____

4. (Crawfordsville)_____

5. (North East)_____

6. (South)_____

7. (136)_____

8. (I-74)_____

9. (Nearly square)_____

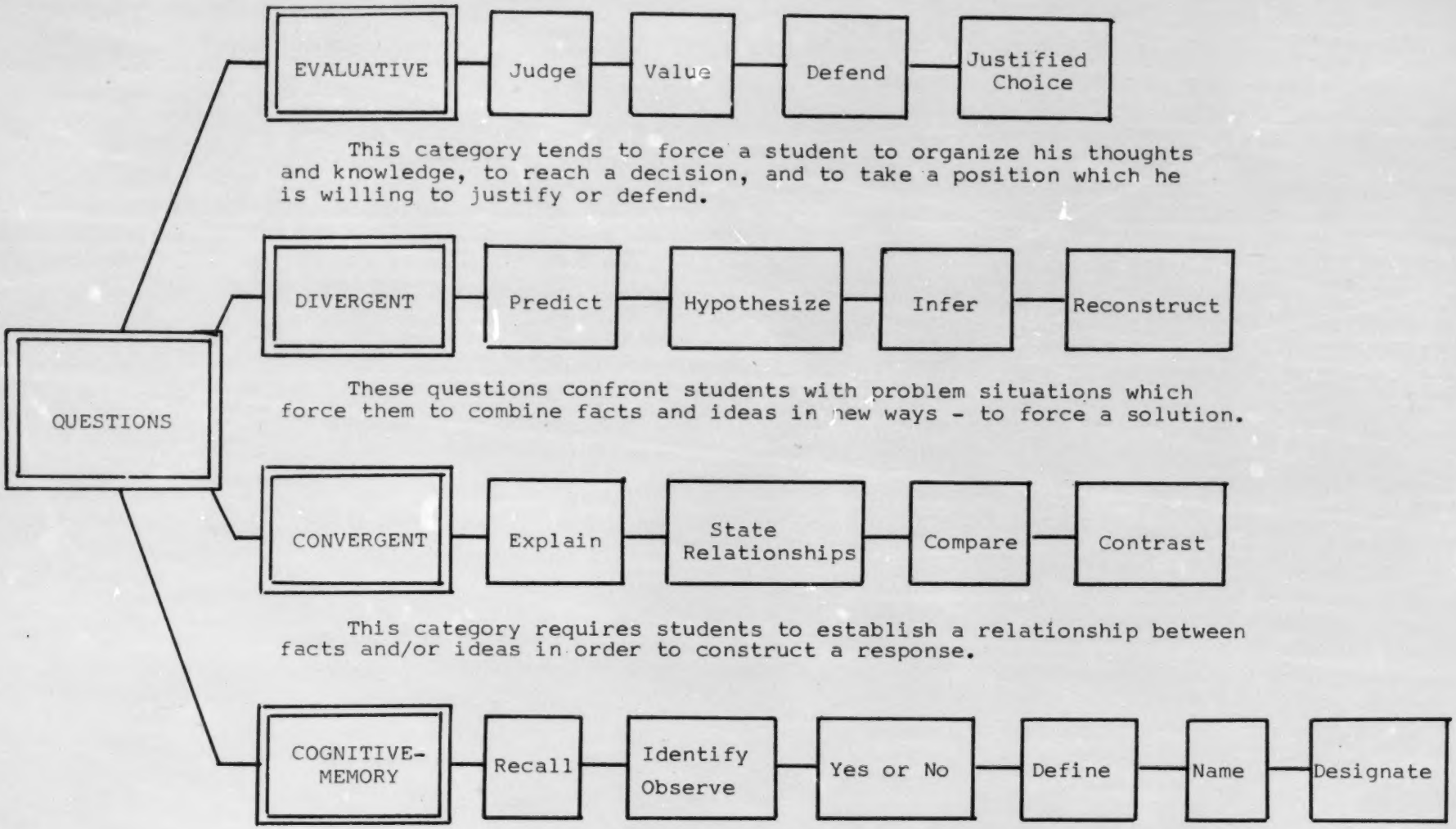
10. (South West)_____

Does it seem like whenever you try something different, some of your students try to shoot you down, some ignore you and some make you wish you hadn't tried?

Just remember that it's only
when you turn the fire out
that your balloon falls.

- Keep it burning!

TAXONOMY



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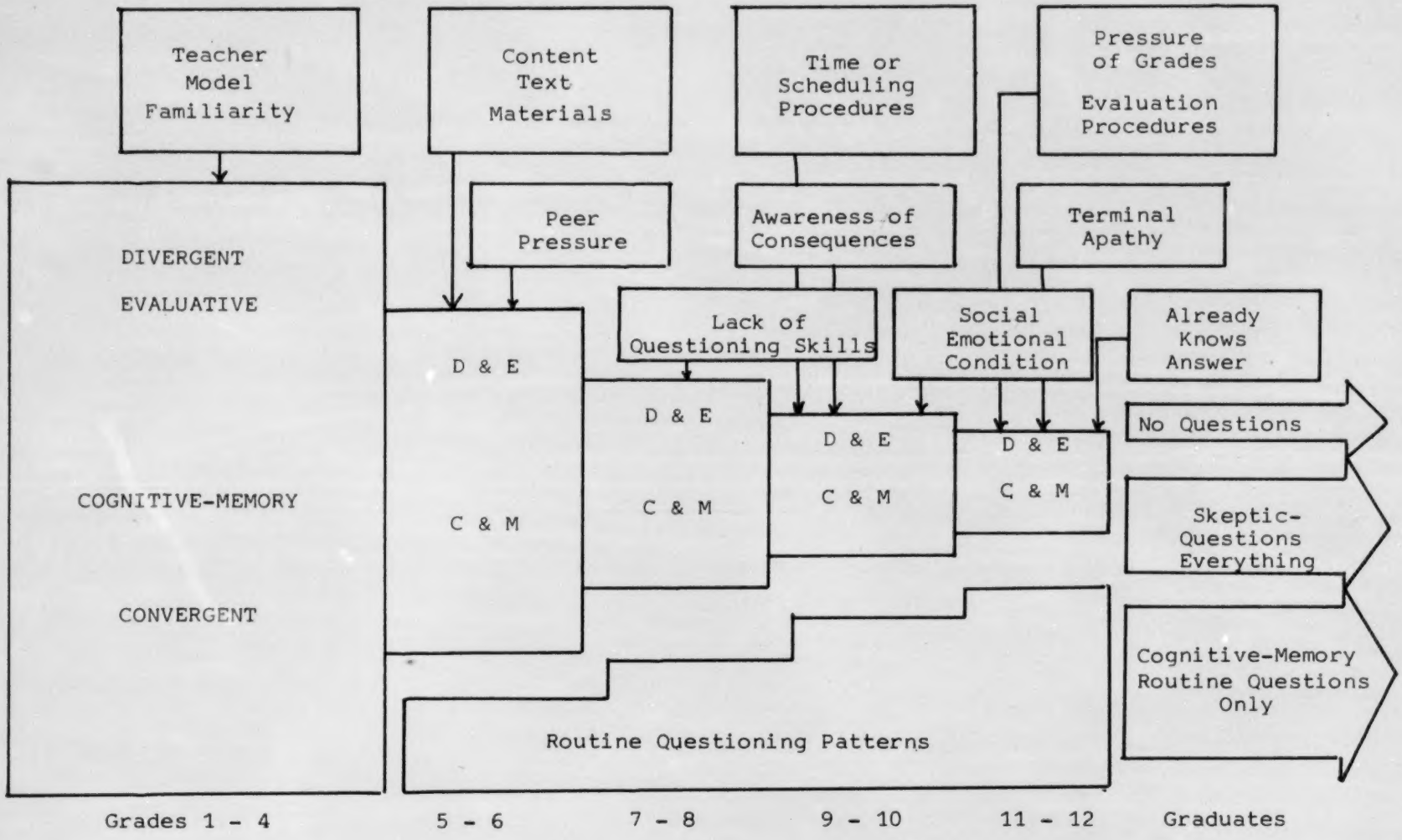
RANKS				
Grade 11	Combined Cognitive-Memory & Convergent	45.59%	44.58%	(-1.01)
	Combined Divergent & Evaluative	54.41%	55.42%	(+1.01)
RANKS				
Grade 12	Combined Cognitive-Memory & Convergent	45.00%	44.96%	(-.04)
	Combined Divergent & Evaluative	55.00%	55.02%	(+.04)

******SUMMARY******

For Combined C-M and C 46.12% - 45.56% (-.56)

For Combined D and E 53.88% - 54.44% (+.56)

Factors Affecting Student Questioning Patterns



QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF QUESTIONS ASKED BY SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS.

Since it's always nice to know who is responsible for that which you are reading, allow me to introduce the folks who put this together.

My sincere appreciation goes to the American taxpayer for footing the bill, to Patty for teaching me new words, to David for his silence, to Pat for the magic of Phaedrus, to Betty for working so hard to make us all look good and finally to J.C. for giving new purpose to my life and work. PTL!